

Letter from the Director of the Bureau of Transportation Statistics

Transportation is the lifeblood of our economy, entering the production of every good and service and accounting for the high level of mobility that is an essential ingredient of our daily life. The President and Congress, in establishing the Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) as a modal administration within the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) in 1991, recognized the critical need for accurate, reliable, timely information and a knowledge base to support a safe, efficient, dependable, and environmentally benign transportation system that serves all Americans. With that in mind, we are creating and making available transportation information to support improved decisionmaking and public policy formation, in addition to facilitating the transition of the broader transportation community into the rapidly emerging Information Age. Taking advantage of state-of-the-art information technologies and organizational opportunities in this era of government reform, which stresses accountability and performance, BTS is organized to respond to the current and emerging needs of its customers.

As a statistical agency, BTS addresses its missions from three perspectives. First, are we measuring the *right things*? This is particularly crucial in a world where transportation services and the socioeconomic, technological, and institutional context in which transportation operates are changing rapidly. Second, are we measuring things *rightly*? This pertains to our work on statistical quality and our research to develop improved measures of such concepts as costs, benefits, etc. Third, what does the information *mean*? The *Transportation Statistics Annual Report* and *National Transportation Statistics*, along with other BTS reports are our interpretive efforts in this area.

In creating the *Journal of Transportation and Statistics (JTS)*, I seek to provide an instrument for open, scientific, and scholarly exchanges that hopefully will aid us in the above missions and in advancing the state of knowledge about transportation in a free society. The purpose of this new journal is to advance the art and science of transportation information to better serve society's common goals. But the *JTS* will not engage in policy advocacy. Strive as we may to present information and analysis objectively and to steer clear of policy positions, it is inevitable that information will occasionally attract political controversy. To ensure the impartiality of the *JTS*, I have selected an editor-in-chief and distinguished editorial board largely from outside of the U.S. government. Of course, DOT is well represented on the editorial board, and the active participation of the various Department administrations will be essential if the journal is to achieve its goals. I have deliberately chosen the vast majority of the editorial board members from among the most eminent scholars in transportation outside of government in the United States and abroad, in the hope that they will keep the *JTS* on a true course regardless of how the political winds may shift about them.

We will publish the *JTS* biannually at first, with the intention of producing a quarterly journal if the volume and caliber of research papers submitted will support it. The *JTS* will be priced affordably to serve a broad spectrum of members of the transportation community. We will encourage participation from government, academia, and industry. All articles will be peer-reviewed by highly qualified scholars, and the decision to publish will be based on technical merit and contribution to the goals of the journal.

I intend the *JTS* to serve BTS's core responsibilities of compiling, analyzing, and making accessible information on the nation's transportation systems, while at the same time developing the understanding necessary to ensure that the information developed is relevant and meaningful, and that it is efficiently and effectively obtained and disseminated. The *JTS* will serve as a forum for the latest developments in transportation information and data, theory, concepts, and methods of analysis relevant to transportation systems and their roles in society, the economy, and the environment. It will provide a unique venue for studies that: 1) present new sources of transportation information, 2) deal with the science of collecting, evaluating, managing, and disseminating transportation information, 3) analyze information to provide insights for public and private decisionmaking, and 4) advance theory and methods relevant to all three

subject areas. The *JTS* will also include methodological and empirical studies analyzing trends, measuring the performance of transportation systems, or developing key indicators.

Like many BTS undertakings over its first few years, the *Journal of Transportation and Statistics* is to some extent an experiment. Developing the information needed to make just and effective decisions about transportation is an enormously important duty. I recognize that there are and will be threats to the continued existence of the *Journal* and to its success. I am counting on the diligence and integrity of the editorial board to guide and protect it. I am asking the community of transportation researchers to support it.

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